Aerial view, ca. 1928.

Photo courtesy Hudson Bay Mining and Smelting Co.

THE MANDY MINE

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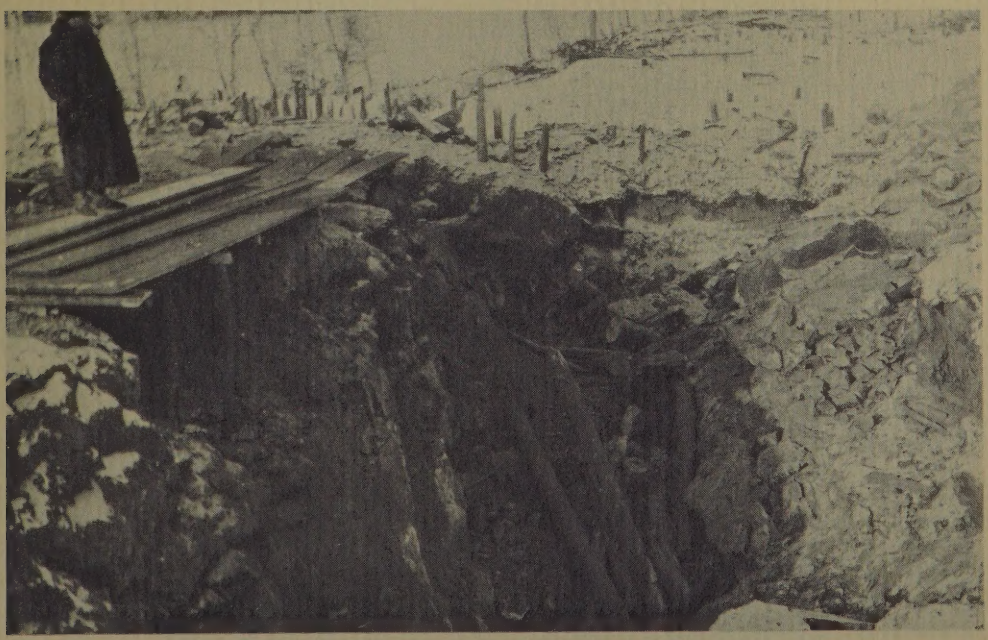
THE MANDY MINE

The excitement surrounding Mandy Mine in its hey-day probably contributed more than any other single event to popular interest in the newly-acquired territories of the former "Postage Stamp" province. With its expansion in 1912, Manitoba acquired a vast area of land associated with the fur trade and having no connection with the prairie wheat economy. The discovery on the west side of the north-west arm of Schist Lake of a copper deposit so rich that it could be mined profitably in spite of tremendous obstacles was to change popular attitudes. The richness of Mandy's production between 1916 and 1920 put a new perspective on Manitoba's north, attracting both capital and prospectors who further developed Manitoba's mining potential. It also created for Mandy Mine a romantic aura which sustained it through two subsequent attempts to re-establish operation.

Interest in mining northern Manitoba was, of course, related to activity elsewhere. The first mining in the Hudson's Bay region at Rainy Lake had discouraged other such ventures without adequate transportation facilities. The nickel and silver finds of the Sudbury region sparked no interest in Northern Manitoba because of the very different rock formations. It was not until gold was discovered in the Porcupine region of Northern Ontario that prospectors realized the potential of the Precambrian rocks also found in Manitoba.

A rash of claim-staking ensued. The first mineral deposits were discovered in the gold-quartz veins at Rice Lake, east of Lake Winnipeg in 1910. Between 1900 and 1915 claims were staked in the north-western regions as well, but no work was done on any of them. In 1915 an Indian named Collins showed rock samples to one of the prospecting parties, led by Creighton who guided them to the sulphide bodies of the Flin Flon Lake region. This brought a flurry of prospecting to the region in the Fall of 1915. One of the claims staked at this time by Fred C. Jackson, a civil engineer with the Hudson Bay Railway, and Sidney S. Reynolds, an experienced prospector, was the site of Mandy Mine. While not the first claim in the area, it was the first to be worked.



Open pit mining at Mandy Mine. Charles B. Morgan, upper left, contracted to haul the ore to Sturgeon Landing.

Photo courtesy Manitoba Archives.

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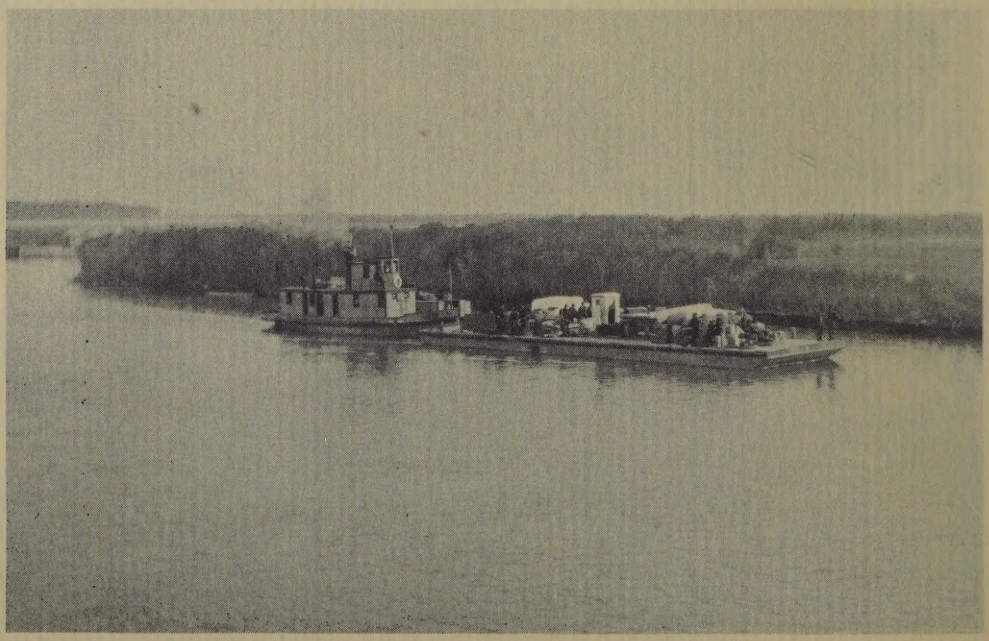
An option on the property was sold to Mr. J. E. Spurr, vice-president of Tonopah Mining Company of Nevada, who was in the district examining other claims. According to the agreement, Tonopah would develop and mine the site, with the original owners receiving a percentage of the profits. The Mandy Mining Co., a wholly owned subsidiary of Tonopah, was formed, and development got under way immediately.

In January, 1916, the first diamond drill in Northern Manitoba was brought to prospect the site. Drilling revealed an ore vein of 25,000 tons of solid chalcopyrite, averaging over 20% copper, with silver and gold to the value of $5.00 per ton, and 180,000 tons of lower grade sulphides. In the first annual report of the Manitoba Department of Mines and Natural Resources, it was reported that "for each thousand dollars spent drilling in this camp, over $1,250,000 in ore has been disclosed."

Although the ore body was too small to warrant erecting a smelter, it was decided to commence extraction immediately to capitalize on wartime high prices for copper (26 cents a pound). With mining machinery hauled from The Pas, including a 125 hp. boiler, a seven-drill compressor and a portable saw mill, surface mining was conducted during the first year, and 3,300 tons of ore hauled to Sturgeon Landing, at the head of the Saskatchewan River navigation route.

Development continued from 1917 to 1920. In 1917 a powerhouse and other mine buildings were constructed, including additional quarters for the men and a "reading and recreation room" for use in the long winter. A shaft was sunk to 100 feet and 50 feet of cross-cutting completed. In the third year of operation, the shaft was extended to the 200-foot level to permit mining at two levels.

During these years, the operation of Mandy Mine required a monumental feat of transportation. When development commenced, the Company brought in a sternwheel steamer and two barges for Schist Lake, and a sixty-ton steam tug for Lake Athapapuskow. During the first winter, however, a freighter from The Pas, by the name of Charlie Morgan, contracted to haul the 3,300 tons of ore from Mandy to Sturgeon Landing by wagon. The average load of a single team of horses for the winter haul was 6½ tons at a cost of 37½ cents per ton-mile. The Provincial Government in response to the promise of northern



Steam tug MINASIN leaving The Pas with supplies for Mandy Mine. ca. 1917.
Photo courtesy Manitoba Archives.

riches, had authorized the preparation of a road from Lake Athapapuskow to Sturgeon Lake in the Fall of 1916, but work had progressed only so far as to permit its use as a winter road. After spring break-up, the Ross Navigation Company moved the ore from Sturgeon Landing to The Pas, where it was loaded onto railway cars and shipped 1,200 miles to Trail, B.C., for smelting.

In the following years an additional 14,000 tons of ore were hauled by various combinations of land, water and rail transportation to the distant smelter. In 1919, the Mandy Mining Co. took over the operations of Ross Navigation Co. and handled its own transportation. It is testimony to Mandy's richness that in spite of tremendous transportation costs, it would still be mined profitably.

The social impact of the boom years at Mandy Mine was not insignificant. The Pas, already benefiting from the extension of the Province of Manitoba and the creation of government offices for northern administration, received a further boost as the headquarters of the Mandy Mining Co. and the jumping-off place where miners and prospectors were outfitted. The 40-60 workers needed for Mandy were hired at The Pas. The major transportation route from Mandy to its suppliers and markets necessarily included The Pas. The success of Mandy Mine also encouraged other mining ventures, many of which further contributed to development of The Pas and other northern communities.

S.S. NIPAWIN arriving at The Pas from Sturgeon Landing with barge load of Mandy ore.
Photo courtesy Manitoba Archives.

Probably the longest-lasting impact of Mandy Mine was not its tangible economic and social contributions to the north, but the aura of excitement and enthusiasm which nurtured many future prospectors in the Flin Flon region. The romantic aura of Mandy as a source of great riches lingered through two subsequent attempts to mine the site. A fall in copper prices and the exhaustion of the richest vein led to the closing of the mine in 1920, when most of the equipment was sold to a Canadian syndicate hoping to develop the Flin Flon property. In 1928, an attempt was made to reactivate the mine. In 1925, the Mandy Mining Co., a wholly owned subsidiary of Tonopah, had been reorganized into Mandy Mines Ltd. and an interest in it acquired by the F. H. McConnell Syndicate of Canada. Canadian newspapers predicted that with the planned Flin Flon smelter and the railway, Mandy could again become profitable. "Alluring possibilities" anticipated in 1928 were proved unrealistic. By 1930, the company had become inactive.

On January 15, 1942, Hudson Bay Mining and Smelting bought control of Mandy Mines Ltd. from Tonopah. The company was liquidated, and in its place was created Emergency Metals Ltd., an H.B.M. & S. subsidiary. It was mined between April, 1943, and December, 1944, as a war measure and the concentrates sold to the United States Government's Metals Reserve Company. The once-rich Mandy was by this time yielding 5.76% copper, a disappointment in the face of 1917 claims that Mandy ore contained up to 90% copper. When the ore was exhausted in 1944, operations were discontinued.

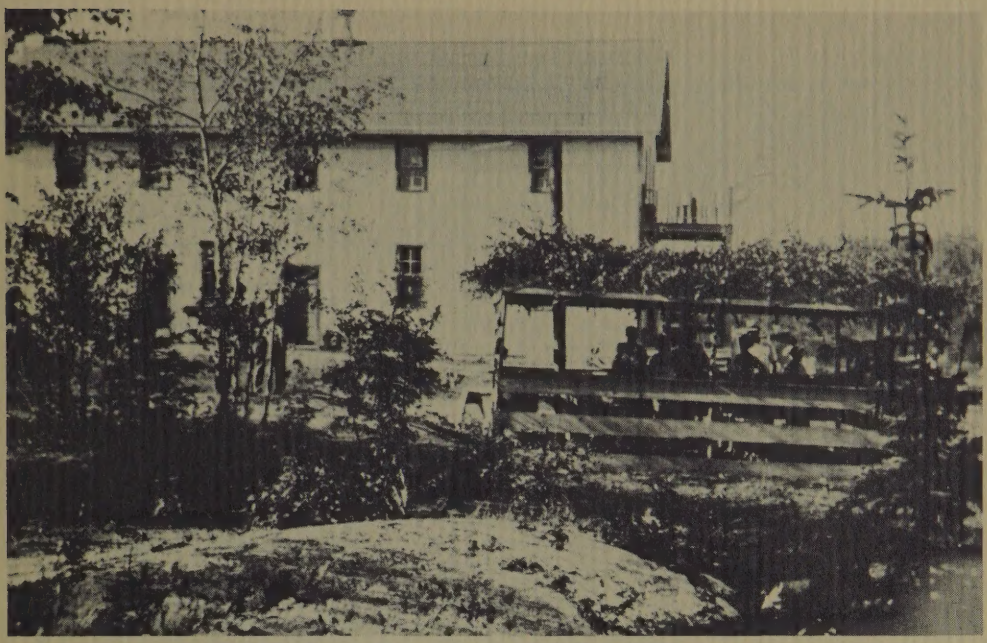
These two futile attempts to revive the Mandy Mines have done little to dim its initial glory. Stories are still told of attempts made in later years to retrieve the pieces of ore lost along the transportation trail from Mandy to Sturgeon Landing, or to raise up barges which had sunk while loaded with Mandy ore. Their truth is of no consequence. They are evidence that the richness of Mandy's first ore has become legendary.

Bibliography of suggested reading:

Mandy Mine usually appears as a simple footnote to most Canadian history books if it is mentioned at all. Two books which will provide additional information to the development of Northern Manitoba at the time of Mandy's discovery are W. L. Morton, **Manitoba: A History,** published by the University of Toronto Press in 1957, and Morris Zaslow, **The Opening of the Canadian North 1870-1914,** from McClelland and Stewart, 1971.

There are a variety of government reports available at the Manitoba Provincial Library and other major libraries. The following reports of the Geological Survey carried out by the Canadian Department of Mines deal with the Mandy claim: **Amisk-Athapapuskow Lake District.** No. 87, Geological Series, 1918; **Summary Report,** 1917, Part D; and **Summary Report,** 1922, Part C. Publications by Manitoba's first Commissioner of the North, J. A. Campbell, such as **Manitoba's Northland. Including Hudson Bay Region and Rice Lake Gold Area,** 1918, and **Northern Manitoba,** 1917, are also useful indicators of the province's new interest in her northern territory.

For a comprehensive local history of the Flin Flon region, see the Flin Flon Historical Society publication, **Flin Flon.**



Bunkhouse, ca. 1943.

Photo courtesy Manitoba Archives.

Mandy Mine, 1925.

Photo courtesy Manitoba Archives.

Mandy ore being hauled over winter road by horse-drawn sleigh. ca. 1917.

Photo courtesy Manitoba Archives

Loading Mandy ore at Sturgeon Landing.

Photo courtesy Manitoba Archives.

Mandy Mine, 1928-42.

Photo courtesy L. Lapointe, Flin Flon, Man.

MANDY MINE

In 1916 Mandy Mine became the first productive copper mine in Manitoba. Discovered in 1915 by F. C. Jackson, an engineer with the Hudson Bay Railway, and S. S. Reynolds, an experienced prospector, it was developed by Mandy Mining Co., a subsidiary of Tonopah Mining Co. of Nevada. Using the first diamond drill in Manitoba, the company found an extremely rich ore containing 20% copper, with silver, gold and sulphides. Between 1916 and 1920, over 17,000 tons of ore were transported by horse and wagon to Sturgeon Landing, on barges to The Pas, and by rail to a smelter at Trail, B.C.

This brief but spectacular success prompted further exploration and investment in the development of Manitoba's mining potential.

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